

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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MR. SCARBOROUGH'S FAMILY.

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER II. MR. PROSPER IS
TAKEN ILL.

WHEN Harry Annesley returned from Cheltenham, which he did about the beginning of February, he was a very happy man. It may be said, indeed, that within his own heart he was more exalted than is fitting for a man mortal,—for a human creature who may be cut off from his joys to-morrow, or may have the very source of his joy turned into sorrow. He walked like a god, not showing it by his outward gesture, not declaring that it was so by any assumed grace or arrogant carriage of himself; but knowing within himself that that had happened down at Cheltenham which had all but divested him of humanity, and made a star of him. To no one else had it been given to have such feelings, such an assurance of heavenly bliss, together with the certainty that, under any circumstances, it must be altogether his own, for ever and ever. It was thus he thought of himself and what had happened to him. He had succeeded in getting himself kissed by a young woman.

Harry Annesley was in truth very proud of Florence, and altogether believed in her. He thought the better of himself because Florence loved him;—not with the vulgar self-applause of a man, who fancies himself to be a lady-killer, and therefore a grand sort of fellow; but as conceiving himself to be something better than he had hitherto believed, simply because he had won the heart of this one special girl. During that half-hour at Cheltenham she had so talked to him, had managed in her own pretty way so to express herself, as to make him understand that of all that

there was of her he was the only lord and master. "May God do so to me, and more also, if to the end I do not treat her, not only with all affection, but also with all delicacy of observance." It was thus that he spoke to himself of her, as he walked away from the door of Mrs. Mountjoy's house in Cheltenham.

From thence he went back to Buston, and entered his father's house with all that halo of happiness shining round his heart. He did not say much about it, but his mother and his sisters felt that he was altered; and he understood their feelings when his mother said to him, after a day or two, that "it was a great shame" that they none of them knew his Florence.

"But you will have to know her,—well."

"That's of course; but it's a thousand pities that we should not be able to talk of her to you as of one whom we know already." Then he felt that they had, among them, all acknowledged her to be such as she was.

There came to the rectory some tidings of the meeting which had taken place at the Hall between his uncle and Miss Thoroughbung. It was Joe who brought to them the first account; and then further particulars leaked out among the servants of the two houses. Matthew was very discreet; but even Matthew must have spoken a word or two. In the first place there came the news that Mr. Prosper's anger against his nephew was hotter than ever. "Mr. Harry must have put his foot in it somehow." That had been Matthew's assurance, made with much sorrow to the housekeeper, or head-servant, at the rectory. And then Joe had declared that all the misfortunes which had attended Mr. Prosper's courtship had been attributed to Harry's evil influences. At first this could not but be a matter of

joke. Joe's stories as he told them were full of ridicule; and had no doubt come to him from Miss Thoroughbung, either directly or through some of the ladies at Buntingford. "It does seem that your aunt has been too many for him." This had been said by Molly, and had been uttered in the presence both of Joe Thoroughbung and of Harry.

"Why, yes," said Joe. "She has had him under the thong altogether; and has not found it difficult to flog him when she had got him by the hind leg." This idea had occurred to Joe from his remembrance of a peccant hound in the grasp of a tyrant whip. "It seems that he offered her money."

"I should hardly think that," said Harry, standing up for his uncle.

"She says so; and says that she declared that ten thousand pounds would be the very lowest sum. Of course she was laughing at him."

"Uncle Prosper doesn't like to be laughed at," said Molly.

"And she did not spare him," said Joe. And then she had by heart the whole story, how she had called him Peter, and how angry he had been at the appellation.

"Nobody calls him Peter except my mother," said Harry.

"I should not dream of calling him Uncle Peter," said Molly. "Do you mean to say that Miss Thoroughbung called him Peter? Where could she have got the courage." To this Joe replied that he believed his aunt had courage for anything under the sun. "I don't think that she ought to have called him Peter," continued Molly. "Of course after that there couldn't be a marriage."

"I don't quite see why not," said Joe. "I call you Molly, and I expect you to marry me."

"And I call you Joe, and I expect you to marry me; but we ain't quite the same."

"The squire of Buston," said Joe, "considers himself squire of Buston. I suppose that the old Queen of Heaven didn't call Jupiter Jove till they'd been married at any rate some centuries."

"Well done, Joe," said Harry.

"He'll become fellow of a college yet," said Molly.

"If you'll let me alone I will," said Joe. "But only conceive the kind of scene there must have been at the house up there, when Aunt Matty had forced her way in among your uncle's slippers and dressing-

gowns. I'd have given a five-pound note to have seen and heard it."

"I'd have given two if it had never occurred. He had written me a letter which I had taken as a pardon in full for all my offences. He had assured me that he had no intention of marrying, and had offered to give me back my old allowance. Now I am told that he has quarrelled with me again altogether, because of some light word as to me and my concerns spoken by this vivacious old aunt of yours. I wish your vivacious old aunt had remained at Buntingford."

"And we had wished that your vivacious old uncle had remained at Buston when he came love-making to Marmaduke Lodge."

"He was an old fool; and, among ourselves, always has been," said Molly, who on the occasion thought it incumbent upon her to take the Thoroughbung rather than the Prosper side of the quarrel.

But, in truth, this renewed quarrel between the Hall and the rectory was likely to prove extremely deleterious to Harry Annesley's interests. For his welfare depended not solely on the fact that he was at present heir presumptive to his uncle, nor yet on the small allowance of two hundred and fifty pounds made to him by his uncle, and capable of being withdrawn at any moment; but also on the fact, supposed to be known to all the world,—which was known to all the world before the affair in the streets with Mountjoy Scarborough,—that Harry was his uncle's heir. His position had been that of eldest son, and indeed that of only child to a man of acres and squire of a parish. He had been made to hope that this might be restored to him, and at this moment absolutely had in his pocket the cheque for sixty-two pounds ten which had been sent to him by his uncle's agent in payment of the quarter's income which had been stopped. But he also had a further letter written on the next day, telling him that he was not to expect any repetition of the payment. Under these circumstances, what should he do?

Two or three things occurred to him. But he resolved at last to keep the cheque without cashing it for some weeks, and then to write to his uncle when the fury of his wrath might be supposed to have passed by, offering to restore it. His uncle was undoubtedly a very silly man; but he was not one who could acknow-

ledge to himself that he had done an unjust act without suffering for it. At the present moment, while his wrath was hot, there would be no sense of contrition. His ears would still tingle with the sound of the laughter of which he had supposed himself to have been the subject at the rectory. But that sound in a few weeks might die away, and some feeling of the propriety of justice would come back upon the poor man's mind. Such was the state of things upon which Harry resolved to wait for a few weeks.

But in the meantime tidings came across from the Hall that Mr. Prosper was ill. He had remained in the house for two or three days after Miss Thoroughbung's visit. This had given rise to no especial remarks, because it was well known that Mr. Prosper was a man whose feelings were often too many for him. When he was annoyed it would be long before he would get the better of the annoyance; and during such periods he would remain silent and alone. There could be no question that Miss Thoroughbung had annoyed him most excessively. And Matthew had been aware that it would be better that he should abstain from all questions. He would take the daily newspaper into his master, and ask for orders as to the daily dinner, and that would be all. Mr. Prosper, when in a fairly good humour, would see the cook every morning, and would discuss with her the propriety of either roasting or boiling the fowl, and the expediency either of the pudding or the pie. His idiosyncrasies were well known, and the cook might always have her own way by recommending the contrary to that which she wanted,—because it was a point of honour with Mr. Prosper not to be led by his servants. But during these days he simply said, "Let me have dinner, and do not trouble me." This went on for a day or two without exciting much comment at the rectory. But when it went on beyond a day or two it was surmised that Mr. Prosper was ill.

At the end of a week he had not been seen outside the house, and then alarm began to be felt. The rumour had got abroad that he intended to go to Italy, and it was expected that he would start. But no sign came of his intended movements. Not a word more had been said to Matthew on the subject. He had been ordered to admit no visitor into the house at all, unless it were someone from the firm of Grey and Barry. From the moment in which

he had got rid of Miss Thoroughbung he had been subject to some dread lest she should return. Or if not she herself, she might, he thought, send Soames and Simpson or some denizen from the brewery. And he was conscious that not only all Buston but all Buntingford was aware of what he had attempted to do. Everyone whom he chanced to meet, would, as he thought, be talking of him, and therefore he feared to be seen by the eye of man, woman, or child. There was a self-consciousness about him which altogether overpowered him. That cook with whom he used to have the arguments about the boiled chicken was now an enemy, a domestic enemy, because he was sure that she talked about his projected marriage in the kitchen. He would not see his coachman or his groom, because some tidings would have reached them about that pair of ponies. Consequently he shut himself up altogether, and the disease became worse with him because of his seclusion.

And now from day to day, or, it may be more properly said, from hour to hour, news came across to the rectory of the poor squire's health. Matthew, to whom alone was given free intercourse with his master, became very gloomy. Mr. Prosper was no doubt gloomy and the feeling was contagious. "I think he's going off his head; that's what I do think," he said in confidential intercourse with the cook. That conversation resulted in Matthew's walking across to the rectory, and asking advice from the rector; and in the rector paying a visit to the Hall. He had again consulted with his wife, and she had recommended him to endeavour to see her brother. "Of course, what we hear about his anger only comes from Joe, or through the servants. If he is angry what will it matter?"

"Not in the least to me," said the rector, "only I would not willingly trouble him."

"I would go," said the rector's wife, "only I know he would require me to agree with him about Harry. That, of course, I cannot do."

Then the rector walked across to the Hall, and sent up word by Matthew that he was there, and would be glad to see Mr. Prosper, if Mr. Prosper were disengaged. But Matthew after an interval of a quarter of an hour came back with merely a note. "I am not very well, and an interview at the present moment would only be depressing. But I would be glad to see my sister if she would come across

to-morrow at twelve o'clock. I think it would be well that I should see some one, and she is now the nearest.—P. P." Then there arose a great discussion at the rectory, as to what this note indicated. "She is now the nearest!" He might have so written had the doctor who attended him told him that death was imminent. Of course she was the nearest. What did the "now" mean? Was it not intended to signify that Harry had been his heir, and therefore the nearest; but that now he had been repudiated? But it was of course resolved that Mrs. Annesley should go to the Hall at the hour indicated on the morrow.

"Oh, yes; I'm up here; where else should I be,—unless you expected to find me in my bed?" It was thus that he answered his sister's first enquiry as to his condition.

"In bed? Oh, no! Why should anyone expect to find you in bed, Peter?"

"Never call me by that name again," he said, rising up from his chair, and standing erect, with one arm stretched out. She called him Peter, simply because it had been her custom so to do, during the period of nearly fifty years in which they had lived in the same parish as brother and sister. She could, therefore, only stare at him, and his tragic humour, as he stood there before her. "Though of course it is madness on my part to object to it! My godfather and godmother christened me Peter, and our father was Peter before me, and his father too was Peter Prosper. But that woman has made the name sound abominable in my ears."

"Miss Thoroughbung, you mean?"

"She came here, and so be-Petered me in my own house—nay, up in this very room—that I hardly knew whether I was on my head or my heels."

"I would not mind what she said. They all know that she is a little flighty."

"Nobody told me so. Why couldn't you let me know that she was flighty beforehand? I thought that she was a person whom it would have done to marry."

"If you will only think of it, Peter——" Here he shuddered visibly. "I beg your pardon, I will not call you so again. But it is unreasonable to blame us for not telling you about Miss Thoroughbung."

"Of course it is. I am unreasonable, I know it."

"Let us hope that it is all over now."

"Cart-ropes wouldn't drag me up to the hymeneal altar;—at least not with that woman."

"You have sent for me, Peter—I beg pardon. I was so glad when you sent. I would have come before, only I was afraid that you would be annoyed. Is there anything that we can do for you?"

"Nothing at all that you can do,—I fear."

"Somebody told us that you were thinking of going abroad." Here he shook his head. "I think it was Harry." Here he shook his head again and frowned. "Had you not some idea of going abroad?"

"That is all gone," he said solemnly.

"It would have enabled you to get over this disappointment without feeling it so acutely."

"I do feel it; but not exactly the disappointment. There I think I have been saved from a misfortune which would certainly have driven me mad. That woman's voice daily in my ear could have had no other effect. I have at any rate been saved from that."

"What is it then that troubles you?"

"Everybody knows that I intended it. All the county has heard of it. But yet was not my purpose a good one? Why should not a gentleman marry if he wants to leave his estate to his own son?"

"Of course he must marry before he can do that."

"Where was I to get a young lady—just outside of my own class? There was Miss Puffle. I did think of her. But just at the moment she went off with young Tazlehurst. That was another misfortune. Why should Miss Puffle have descended so low just before I had thought of her? And I couldn't marry quite a young girl. How could I expect such a one to live here with me at Buston where it is rather dull? When I looked about there was nobody except that horrid Miss Thoroughbung. You just look about and tell me if there was any one else. Of course my circle is circumscribed. I have been very careful whom I have admitted to my intimacy, and the result is that I know almost nobody. I may say that I was driven to ask Miss Thoroughbung."

"But why marry at all unless you're fond of somebody to be attached to?"

"Ah!"

"Why marry at all, I say. I ask the question knowing very well why you intended to do it."

"Then why do you ask?" he said angrily.

"Because it is so difficult to talk of Harry to you. Of course I cannot help feeling that you have injured him."

"It is he that has injured me. It is he that has brought me to this condition. Don't you know that you've all been laughing at me down at the rectory since this affair of that terrible woman?" While he paused for an answer to his question, Mrs. Annesley sat silent. "You know it is true. He and that man whom Molly means to marry, and the other girls, and their father and you, have all been laughing at me."

"I have never laughed."

"But the others?" And again he waited for a reply. But the no reply which came did as well as any other answer. There was the fact that he had been ridiculed by the very young man whom it was intended that he should support by his liberality. It was impossible to tell him that a man who had made himself so absurd must expect to be laughed at by his juniors. There was running through his mind an idea that very much was due to him from Harry; but there was also an idea that something too was due from him. There was present, even to him, a noble feeling that he should bear all the ignominy with which he was treated, and still be generous. But he had sworn to himself, and had sworn to Matthew, that he would never forgive his nephew. "Of course you all wish me to be out of the way?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it is true. How happy you would all be if I were dead, and Harry were living here in my place."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, I do. Of course you would all go into mourning, and there would be some grimace of sorrow among you for a few weeks, but the sorrow would soon be turned into joy. I shall not last long, and then his time will come. There! you may tell him that his allowance shall be continued in spite of all his laughing. It was for that purpose that I sent for you. And now you know it, you can go and leave me." Then Mrs. Annesley did go, and rejoiced them all up at the rectory by these latest tidings from the Hall. But now the feeling was, how could they show their gratitude and kindness to poor Uncle Prosper?

A DAY IN PERUGIA.

How stern it sits upon its pointed rock, the grim dark houses built terrace-wise on the Etruscan walls! A frowning old city, black with the stains of blood and war and

rapine, and heavy with the incense of human sacrifices!

The shadows fall upon a vast plain, a plain that smiles up at the sombre ramparts, rich in corn and wine and olive. If land and tree, and wall and roof, and winding sombre stair, and cankering dismal archway, and the long lines of deep *sdrucchioli* which slip beneath the feet, could speak an articulate language, that tongue would be Etruscan.

Not even the railroad, nor the gas—which shines out at night brilliant under the moon, crowning the old rock like sacrificial fires—can redeem Perugia from the dark past.

Nothing will take the furrows out of thy wrinkled brow, thou dread old city, chief among the twelve tribes of Etruria, so bloody in their deeds. As thou wert, so art thou now, hard as the effigies upon thy tombs, where even the common gestures of humanity—the drooping head, the powerless arm, the form recumbent in death—take a stern attitude, wherein mercy dwells not.

As I look forth over the varied lines of lofty Apennine and level flat, I see a gap between the distant hills. There lies *Thrasymene*, a fair and spacious lake, sleeping in silence under the autumn sun. Pastoral villages and fairy capes jut out upon its surface.

Alas! what memories! What carnage! Those vineyards on the other side at *Ossaja*, the village of Roman bones, where legions lay slain under their eagles! That dried-up rivulet that falls into the placid lake and is called *Sanguinetto*, or "the bloody stream," ever since that fatal day, so long ago, when *Hannibal* beat *Flaminius*!

The whole land reeks with the fumes of slaughter. The fair hand of Nature cannot wipe out the stain. There it will lurk unto the end of all things.

I mount a long, steep, winding road from the station, through groves and gardens, in many a curve, seated in a gaily-painted omnibus, a four-in-hand, with a driver who knows how to use the whip. The road, broad and smooth, zigzags upwards, and we reach the summit at a full gallop unconsciously; and just outside the gate and the grim protesting walls is the new *Hotel Bruffani*, overshadowed by acacias, its door hospitably open. Enter! You will not repent it. You will be well fed, well housed, and fairly spoken, at a price surprisingly minute; and you will enjoy—

an item not charged for in the bill—the grandest outlook eye can range over in the length and breadth of united Italy.

Outside, Perugia is as fiercely Etruscan as Cortona. Inside, provokingly Gothic, and when not Gothic, Roman. That grandest monument of Etruscan art, the Porta Augusta, where the Pelasgic blocks mount to the curve of the arch, is dominated by a Roman frontispiece and Latin inscription. Add to this a mediæval loggia on one side, and you behold the accumulated spite of centuries.

The Porta Marzia, cut in the city wall, is narrow, low, and cruel-looking. The eye starts back from those three projecting figures, leaning forward as with a curse, and the horses' heads on the strange flat pilasters, squeezed together as if for a sepulchral chamber where space is precious. Here also Imperial Rome flaunts itself in carved letters: "Colonia Vibia" and "Augusta Perusia," repeated like a brand-mark.

Inside, I look around and see nothing but mediæval façades, carved windows, arabesques, gurgoyles, and the nineteenth century in wide streets leading to palaces new as mushrooms. At this modern trifling, a righteous anger comes over me. I will turn my back and fly. But fate steps in and stops me—fate, in the form of a pale, hunger-pinched wretch, with a much-mended coat, once black, now fading into white—a cicerone who fell upon and captured me at the door of the Hotel Bruffani, whom I, indeed, dismissed curtly, like a dog, but who still followed me at a distance, with a respect nothing could move, and such a woebegone countenance, that at last I stopped, ashamed of my own rudeness.

It was the usual tale—a dead wife, sick children, a blind mother. Nobody came to Perugia; the direct line of rail to Rome was taken to Chiusi. M. Bruffani, the landlord, was very good—half kept him, and gave him clothes. Clothes, forsooth! Bruffani wore them himself thread-bare; and that hat! It must have served the little Bruffanis as a ball to roll up and down the hill. Hat, indeed! Worn and napless, and so large that, vainly seeking its centre of gravity, it rested on the bridge of his nose. I think it was that hat that conquered me—and the wildly-searching eyes.

Standing reflectively in the Municipal Piazza, before a brand-new prefecture, the

whiteness of which made my eyes ache, fate deemed the moment opportune to take up his parable.

"Signora," he said in a gentle voice, "permit me. Our Etruscan gates and walls speak for themselves. We have no annals of them except upon the tombs. But here," and he gave a sweep round with his eye, "I might assist the lady excellence if she would permit me. The churches—does not the excellence want to see the churches?"

"Yes; those with the works of Perugino. Otherwise I am disgusted. They have modernised Perugia."

My remark seemed to strike him with a new light. He started. Was the excellence to whom he had attached himself a lunatic? I am sure that was his thought. Then, seeing me smile, he laughed and understood.

"Ah, madame, you must not look for anything Etruscan in the streets. That would be—permit me to say—scarcely reasonable. But surely the cinque cento is our grandest national period."

"I am tired of cinque cento; it dogs me everywhere."

As I spoke, my eye fell on a marble fountain, much blackened by time, and surrounded by a multitude of graceful figures, some small, some large—supports to three separate basins, polygon in shape, raised upon marble steps, three sweetest interlacing nymphs curving the upper basin. My eyes fell on this masterpiece, I say, and I felt I was a sinner. How could I carp and grumble with such a piece of work before me?

Fate, eager for a day's wage, with his blind mother in his eye at home in some mildewed cellar, keenly watched my countenance.

"The excellent lady," he presently ventured, with a timid smile (an excellency who refused to fall down before cinque cento was such an anomaly), "may become reconciled. This fountain is so beautiful, done by Niccolo and Giovanni du Pisa in the tre cento."

"I know, I know; but what are centuries beside Pelasgic Gates?"

"Well, madame, I can show you these, anything you please."

"I won't see all the churches," I cried, waxing obstinate again. "Understand that I am no stranger. I have visited Perugia before."

At my vehemence he grew pale.

But he only said very meekly:

"It will be my privilege to show madame what she pleases."

How could I resist him? Again his hat—now fallen a little on one side over his right ear—pleaded for him.

As a rule I hate cicerones. Why had he ever come?

The Gothic cathedral rises before me with bare unfinished walls. Originally it had been proposed to drape them, but after a dozen ranges or so, the architect had apparently got tired and left it. There remains nothing of ornament but some carved lancet windows and a sculptured porch.

Projecting on one side is an odd little pulpit too small for any but a priest to stand in.

Fate, catching my eye fixed on it, the plaques of Opus Alexandrinum work shining in the September sun, proceeded.

"Trifles which mark an era are interesting," he remarked; "also as local indications. No one addresses the people now from pulpits such as these, like Savonarola and San Bernadino di Siena, when he came from the osservanza. We have the senate and the parliament. The honourable deputies talk a great deal, but not in that familiar way. They would not condescend to reason with the people as the others did, and make their best speeches at the risk of being caught in a shower, or having half a sentence swept off by the wind. Ah me! these are other times. We have suffered for Rome and unity. No direct rail to Rome now."

Here Fate struck a sympathetic chord.

That emperor, who lamented having lost a day, should have had the loss aggravated by passing it at a railway-station—especially the station of Terontola, an utterly weary and impossible place on the lake of Thrasymene, where I spent four weary hours yesterday, staring at vacancy, brown hills, and pigs, before I could come on to Perugia in a luggage train laden with iron.

"Beside that pulpit there," continued Fate cheerfully, pointing with a deplorably gloved finger, "you see the arcade. That is the loggia of Forte Braccio. He besieged Perugia in 1416, and became its tyrant. Under that loggia he sat and dispensed what was called justice. The excellency will have read of Forte Braccio in the *Inferno* of Dante."

I waived off poetical reminiscences, always unfortunate in the mouth of a cicerone, and asked what was remarkable in the gaunt bare-walled cathedral.

"A fine painting by Baroccio."

"Pass that by," said I. "What else?"

"The wedding-ring of the Virgin."

"Ah," cried I, "I will go in to see the wedding-ring."

"Ah, but you can't, madame. The ring has its own altar, and is kept in a box locked with fourteen locks. There is a silver cloud before it, on the altar. Twice a year the cloud descends by pulleys, the locks are opened, and the box——"

"What do you see then?"

"An onyx ring, black, and very small. But," excusingly, "madame knows these are cose di pietà. The lower orders believe it."

Heavens! Did this poor Fate contemplate a lower order than himself?

To appreciate Vannucci Perugino and his school, you must come to Perugia. Like Raphael at the Vatican, Titian in Venice, Velasquez at Madrid, he is only to be understood on the walls of his adopted city.

And not Perugino only, but his excellent master, Bonfigli, a practical kind of Perugino without his spiritualised conceptions. Also Perugino's school, exclusive of the divine Raffael, an eclectic, who becomes much less divine after visiting Perugia and observing how much he owes to the good man Vannucci his master.

And the school still lives in Perugia.

Someone said the genuineness of a melody consisted in being ground on barrel-organs at street-corners. Now there is a tailor's shop opposite in which neither cloth nor raiment are exposed to view. Only a white blind drawn, on which is painted by some bold young hand a charming group of angels with curly heads, and interlacing arms, in a free reading of the master.

I see hardly a ceiling that is not worthy of attention by reason of its arabesques, its spiral quaintness, and interminable wealth of interlacing lines, medallions, and figure groups.

It is quite pleasant to lie in bed in the morning at the Hotel Bruffani and study the attitudes of infant gods, graces, and muses glowing in the early sunshine, which will insist, spite of shutter and blind, in penetrating into the room.

I believe the first strokes of Perugian babies are in arabesque, a manner as much rooted here as the Etruscan walls. The place is full of graceful nothings executed by commonest artisans for a few lire, but the like not to be reproduced in Paris or London without the costly brush of a practised artist.

The wall-painter can no more tell you how he works, than can the butcher there, who cuts a sweet-smelling young bay-tree, and plants it in a tub to ornament his doorway. Nor the sausage-maker, his neighbour, who twines tall lilies round his wares, among sweet herbs, and wreaths of eglantine. It is instinct.

It is not for me to celebrate the heavenly beauty of the masterpieces in the Sala di Cambio. Nor do I care to tell the rapture which came over me in visiting them twenty years after my first view. These are things which live immortal, and burst on one like the glories of the sunset, or the ocean. Yet how cruelly have the beautiful frescoes suffered! How worn, and faded, and stained they are.

Too late the stupid municipality found that wind and dust, and damp from open doors, iron-barred windows, the greasy shoulders of money-lenders, and smearing of dirty hands and greasy fingers, were not adapted to improve soft and subtle shadings and transparent tintings.

Too late they drove out the money-changers and bankers, the roving dogs, the errant cats. The harm was done. Cato and Camillus, the seven planets, Apollo, Venus, Jupiter, and Mars, quaintly mixed up with the Nativity and Transfiguration, had felt the vulgar touch.

The adjoining chapel, by reason of its sanctity, shines out as brilliant as though it had been painted yesterday; the light from the arched windows plays upon colours caught as from rainbows.

In the Sala di Cambio, Perugino works upon stucco, here on tavola. His scholars too are present, so that one can appreciate the vitality of the school.

Raffael was but one among many—the lucky one with that pale poetic face—who went to Rome and was favoured by Popes and Kings. The others, Mami, Alfani, La Spagna, and Pinturicchio, worked their way upwards without golden ladders; but Mami and Alfani, at Perugia (they are unknown elsewhere), tread hard on the heels of the divine.

There are a pair of sybils in an arch by Mami nobler than those by Raffael in the church of St. Maria del Popolo, at Rome. Indeed, one sees that Raffael condescended to borrow from his fellow students—at a safe distance—as he borrowed from the ancients in the classic frescoes of Titus's Baths.

All this I repeat to myself in the Pinacoteca, a disused church, used as a pleasant

art sanctuary; where virgins, pale and subdued, as if Perugino had not dared to re-touch them, hang side by side with works of his stalwart pupils, who, less reverent than he, fling about brilliant tints in saints and prophets. Quaint old Bonfigli actually, with the Archangel Gabriel ruffled and petticoated, and flounced with wings, and the Virgin in her best gown, and that a gay one. Yet all so touching, so tender, one overlooks the monstrous anomaly, and loves the artist, who is so like the child!

The day is cold and stormy, a tramontana wind whistles fiercely round the corners of carved palaces, and a cloudy sky rests on gurgoyled roofs, where lion and griffin seem to hiss with rage.

Two o'clock, and I am just come from looking at the illustrated Ciceri, in the municipal library, a lovely little book of the fourth century—one of the three oldest in existence—and the way that Andromeda with Perseus, and disreputable Ariadne, with Tegeo hovering over her, are mixed up with Scripture, is a wonder to behold. A little book no bigger than my hand, yet each page so occupying eye and brain, that one forgets what has gone before in the charm of what comes after. The civil librarian trusts me bodily with the treasure, to turn over on my knee, and gaze my fill at the fascinating little birds, perched on arabesques, running down the text; tiny brown squirrels, gambolling up and down capital letters; and the sweetest flowers, a complete collection of the flora of that day, now banished to cottage-borders—lilies, dog-rose, monks-hood, and double daisies, exquisitely touched on the soft vellum.

Fresh from this precious book, and the fragrance of wild strawberries and autumn blackberries, for fruit was also upon the page, the desolation outside seems all the more appalling.

To get out of the roar of the wind I pass down flights of stairs to the Augustan arch with its vile Roman mountings, and reach a little square before the Antenor Palace—a friendly little square, where Boreas is silent. There I find three empty gigs drawn up in one corner, helplessly appealing to the confidence of the public, the shafts turned skywards; a big load of hay piled on a cart; and on the pavement many couples of cocks and hens, tied by the legs in a basket, suffering too great agony to cackle. With a glance at

the richly-carved front of the palace, frowning down defiance on all around, as a haughty belle gathers her robes in a ball-room, I enter a cavernous hall, mount a huge stair, knock at a dark door, opened by a smiling maid, and find myself in a lofty panelled chamber—one of a long, long suite of such extending in dusky perspectives—and am engulfed in a family circle, the centre figure a noble-looking man with a grand head, blind, but with so many auxiliary hands and eyes ready to help him that he almost forgets his infirmity. His wife, a typical Virtue, orders all things rightly, and two gipsy-faced daughters—one of whom might have served Pope for a model of Belinda.

What warmth in their clasping hands!
What melody in their voices!

Belinda has a thousand reproaches to make that I have been so long in coming, and G—— lays her hand on my arm, and looks into my face with two large plaintive eyes, an execution in them equal to a gun-battery.

"You need not speak, G——; I understand—and someone else understands also."

Yes, G—— need not be lip-eloquent, her eyes speak for her.

"Now you are here," cries motherly Virtue, "we will not let you go. I am mistress here, and exact obedience."

"No, no! Not go!" sounds in a general chorus, led by Roberto, with the delightful family smile, and that intense glance from under a pair of eyes, which one feels that many a woman has studied to her cost.

Then I am presented to Hugo, mighty with his pen, one of the brethren from that pleasant land of inland ports and moneyless citizens, which those abuse who have no passport to it; the land where Wit is king and Pathos his consort, Eloquence and Poetry ministers, and Humour, Invention, and Epigram, chief counsellors.

If I were to say there is much to see in Perugia I should tell a fib. There are one hundred churches, and of these not more than two merit a visit.

To make short work I will say that San Domenico has been ruthlessly modernised by Carlo Maderno—Bernini and his school are the scourge of ancient churches all over Italy—and San Pietro, jutting out on the castellated walls, over the boundless plain through which old Tiber flows—a dull dark church, with numbers of

valueless pictures, and one gem alone by Perugino in the sacristy—so little has San Pietro impressed me, that I only recall a door behind the grand altar, which the attendant monk, a Benedictine, flung open and disclosed a balcony overlapping the rock whence, like Moses on Sinai, I gazed on the promised land towards Rome.

Before me were the Umbrian mountains tier above tier, on which old Sol played antic tricks in carmine and cobalt, here a dash of yellow, there a blue-green sky upon which a premature star twinkled faintly, as if ashamed of rising before its time; the whole city of Assisi spread out on a hill-side terracing on arches, and oak-capped heights towards Narni and Foligno, sharp cut and sombre as from gazing down century after century on hideous sights of war and battle.

"I see," said the grave Benedictine who conducted me, with a smile, as he watched my earnest gaze, "the lady loves the works of nature better than those of art."

A mild reproof for the scant attention I had bestowed on the bad paintings which sent me outside, unenchanted, into a sycamore grove on an escarpment—a silent sunny nook, with formal paths of laurel, broken stone benches, empty of all but twittering sparrows; pebbles glistening like jewels in the sun, and a few pale roses waving drooping heads—already doomed, for the hand of frost had touched them.

There is an opera at Perugia, as set forth on the Etruscan walls, and I go with my friends on condition that I sit in the back of the box and have Hugo to talk to.

How my poor Fate and I fumbled up the long cordons from the hotel to the theatre! We did it, spite of wind and darkness, made visible by far-off lamps, between which one might conveniently be murdered and flung down a yawning precipice, and no one the wiser—specially not the gendarmes, who always run the other way, not to "compromise" themselves with criminals.

Considering the weather, Fate had put himself into his shabbiest clothes—in his company I learned there are depths of seediness unknown to me before—and looked so disreputable that, as far as prudence would permit, I cut his acquaintance, walking alone, as though belonging to darkness and the night.

At the door of the theatre I was fain to acknowledge, such a stampede of citizens I never saw—so eager to purchase tickets, they could neither walk nor stand, nor

permit others. At last I reach box Number Eighteen, and find Madame Virtue and Belinda, so pretty with her curls and her bouquets, black mittens and rosy fingers. Hugo, winking slyly at me out of a corner, seemed troubled about his gloves. One he had succeeded in getting on, but the other was recalcitrant. I think it split up at last; he certainly never wore it, and was preoccupied and silent.

Dear Virtue, utterly untruthful, insisted on my sitting forward in the box, and when I reproached her, out of my corner, for her untruthfulness and said, "The mother of a family should more respect her word," replied by laughing.

It was better so, for Belinda in the front, a very queen of flowers, attracted so many bees and wasps, gnats and butterflies, in the shape of Perugian golden youths, I should certainly have been flattened against the wall, like a dummy in a pantomime.

Perhaps it was not really that black glove that engrossed Hugo so—the idea came to me in the course of the evening—seeing his useless conflicts with an ill-cut thumb. Certainly the more the golden youth abounded, the more obstinate his glove became. Instead of amusing me, as he had promised, not a word passed his lips. He gave a piercing glance now and then to the front, at Belinda, her wilful curls and bewildering mittens, and when the glove finally failed him, by "bursting up," requested permission to go out and smoke.

Ungrateful girl! I came to know after, that as a mere child Hugo had worshipped the ground she trod on, and that ever since she had worn "tails," and those long, confusing curls hanging about her head, he had declared his passion.

Alas! he got no encouragement. Belinda observed quite dryly: "Hugo was a dear good fellow, and that she liked him when he was gay, and made her laugh; but"—little puss!—"was not Hugo Roberto's friend? And she could not, now could she"—here a saucy glance from bright eyes, under a fringe of black tresses—"love all her brother's friends?"

So Belinda spoke, and so Hugo waited.

The opera was *La Fille de Madame Angot*. The poor singers came from Arezzo, where they had done so little that they had been forced to leave their clothes and properties in pawn. They had made a pathetic appeal to the notabilities of Perugia, and the notabilities had res-

ponded. The properties had arrived, the debt been cancelled, and a full house the consequence.

The boxes *régorgée'd*, each presenting the aspect of a united happy family, down to the baby; the parents at the back, and so on, diminuendo to the front.

All the bravery of the city was upon their backs; pounds of false hair, and false flowers and feathers, forming a jumble incomprehensible on a human skull.

Where had they hidden themselves all day, these people? I asked myself. I never saw a creature in the streets, deserted even by cats, which, I presume, preferred the house-tops.

A bride was present, much discussed by the young men, who laid bets freely as to her beauty by daylight. Poor little soul! It came to her in the air, and she looked shy and indignant. Near her sat the general in command, a bronze statue to look at, wonderfully like the late king. Near the general sat the *Sindaco*, a dapper little man, wearing spectacles, talking incessantly, his hair brushed flat, a broad parting like a high road down his head. The *generalissima* too, a very gorgeous lady, who, as the *Sindaco* took his place in her box, bowing low, to pay her a visit, seemed to resign herself in a well-bred way to silence and boredom.

And now the time is come for me to say farewell to Perugia. Fate led me to the station with a visage of blank woe, and there I found G—and Belinda waiting for me, the last quite in a confusion of prettiness, the sun glinting on her like a picture. Hugo was also wearing his natural countenance. He had her to himself to-day, and was happy.

Moral:

Live at Bruffani's excellent hotel, submit to "Fate," avoid the opera and the churches with nothing inside. Partake sparingly of the Middle Ages, ditto of Roman; study Etruscan "bits" and Etruscan gates. Take lovely Umbrian Nature to your heart, and you will not repent it.

NOBODY'S CHILD.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"DONG—dong—dong!" It was the accustomed invitation of the chapel-bell to matins, but its mournful monotone, dulled by the low-lying clouds, had a tone of added melancholy that morning, as it rolled over the heath-clad hills, and lost itself in the vaporous distance.

"Chapel-time," said Padeen to himself, as the first wave of muffled sound swept up to his ears through the open window of the hayloft; "chapel-time, I'm so glad!" and then he started up, bright and warm and alert, from the nest he had made for himself among the dried grass and clover-blossoms, and looked round him with eyes as soft and clear and innocent as those of a little rabbit.

Padeen had been idling, but one can idle with a clear conscience when one's work is done, and that morning there was no laggard duty owing to the priest, or the pony, or the priest's maid, or anyone.

"Sunday comes once a week for everybody," said Padeen thankfully, as he slid down the ladder that led through the trap-door into the stable, and stood on his bare brown feet looking out at the sullenly falling rain.

Sunday for every one, the rest day, the day of peace, when they could lift their bowed shoulders and smooth their troubled faces, and fold their hard hands, finding happiness in just so little.

Padeen loved the Sunday always, but most when he thought of old friends. For himself every day was a glad day now, since the priest had found him and altered the whole face of existence for him. But the priest could not find everyone in the big, hungry, over-filled world, and so hundreds were still in what had been his evil case of not understanding anything beautiful, and not hoping for or expecting it.

Padeen worshipped the priest, not knowing that idolatry is sin. How could he help it? Like embodied love and power and patience the father had come to him in the slough of his dull, hopeless, animal existence, and had lifted him up and taught him that work need not be all toil, and that life need not be all pain.

Padeen had not known that till he had known Father James, nor anything save that men were very close to the beasts; that they were born like them anyhow; that they suffered like them uncomplainingly; that they died like them after a time, and were swept aside and forgotten like the withered leaves.

He was only a little Irish boy, nobody's child, just a waif dropped at Hughie Mahony's cottage door one spring morning, two years after Hughie's sister, pretty, ignorant, warm-hearted Norah, had gone away in a pet to better herself and never to return, and he had been found there

and taken care of by Hughie, because Hughie had a good heart and half-a-dozen children of his own, and nothing to feed them but the uncertain produce of the potato-patch.

"Where Heaven sends mouths it always sends something to put into them," said long-legged, simple, sheepish Hughie, looking down on the foundling, and ignoring the intrusive memory of dear years, and spoiled harvests, and the "potato rot." "Throw him in among the others, Kitty; we'll never miss his bit." So Padeen sat on Kitty's lap with her own baby, and fared as the others fared, and grew big enough by-and-by to tend the pig or the goslings, or mind the babies that succeeded his contemporary.

He was happy enough, because no greater happiness smote him with a sense of contrast; and if life for him meant cold and hunger many a time, it also meant a game on the moors with the other boys, and running and laughter in the sunshine, and sometimes a seat by the bright peat-fire when Kitty was cheerful enough to tell them tales of Fortunatus, or Cinderella, or the golden parrot and the bunch of speaking leaves. Of course those golden moments were rare, and the privation and scarcely conscious pain were constant factors in his life; but then what of that, since they are so in all lives? Padeen was not a sentimentalist, and those clear, soft, soulless eyes of his saw distinctly enough that he was no worse off than his neighbours. He was nobody's child, but ties of kindred don't count for much where pockets are empty and hearts are warm, and Padeen knew thoroughly well that Kitty and Hughie saw no reason to distinguish him from any of their own sons.

And then he loved them, and was growing useful. Already he could carry as heavy a burden as Dan who was three years his senior, and he was far more patient and obedient when told to fetch and carry. But that was no great merit in Padeen, for he loved the free air and the grey-blue sky, and the long stretches of humid turf, and the billows of heath breaking here and there into a foam of pink and purple blossoms and surging up to the horizon; so that it was pleasure to quit the smoky, overcrowded cabin and flit over the earth with fleet bare feet, or sit under a cover of coarse sacking, among the tufts of rushes in the pasture-land, watching that the hornless cow did not wander into the

corn-patch or the potato-ridge, and dream-
ing his dreams as the rain fell.

Nothing could hinder him dreaming, for he had always that heritage of the future to enter upon. Like every other son of Adam he would attain maturity one day, for who ever thinks of death who is young? And maturity meant strength, and effort, and achievement of some sort. Yes, Padeen would grow up, and would find himself old enough and big enough to quit the home-nest, and to fly out into the great world, away, away, where towns were built and great factories roared, and steam and fire became the slaves of man. But of course Padeen would not see those for many a day. At first he would only do as Kitty's sons did; go to the nearest town at Michaelmas or Lady Day, and hire with some farmer living south, and follow him with his one homespun shirt in his small bundle, and so pass away from the moors for ever.

What he should do at first among the strangers who "had" no Irish he did not understand very well, but he knew he would have to work hard, minding the cattle and toiling in the harvest-field till he grew strong enough to drive the cart and guide the plough. And then he would be paid wages consisting of silver shillings and golden guineas maybe, and then—Padeen lost himself in undefined, magnificent speculations.

But he would be sorry leaving the glen, and Kitty, and Hughie; and Kitty would cry a little after him, as she had done after Denis and Brian and Mike. But she would be consoled by degrees, as she had been before; so that should he ever return to visit her, as Denis had done, bringing her the hoarded savings of two years, he would find himself half forgotten too, and would see that Kitty was constrained and uncomfortable in his presence, having learned to do without him.

Padeen sighed as he thought of this, drawing the sackcloth cover more closely over him, and hiding his face in the burden of rushes that he had cut for the cow's bedding that night. The cow was Padeen's pride and special charge, and the largest item in Hughie's growing wealth. It had been a happy day for all the Mahonys when that cow took its corner in the overcrowded cabin, and to Padeen the world seemed a warmer, brighter place when Molly's soft eyes met his and her fragrant breath fanned his cheek.

"Hi, boy! you should not sleep in the rain."

"I wasn't sleeping." He pushed the coarse cloth back from his face and sat erect, looking up at the stranger with his soft, frank gaze.

"What were you doing then?"

"Thinking."

"Thinking of what?"

"Of nothing."

"You could not think of nothing."

"Maybe not." Padeen was a little nonplussed. Of course the stranger must be right; a man like that, who looked so old and so young at the same time, and who "had" the Irish in such a pleasant though odd way, was sure to know everything. But it had really seemed to Padeen as if he had been thinking hard about nothing.

"Whose son are you?"

"Nobody's."

"Nobody's! How is that?"

"Hughie found me, and keeps me to tend things, till I'm big enough to hire."

"And when will that be?"

"Next year maybe."

"And Hughie is kind to you?"

"Oh yes."

"Does he teach you anything?"

"Oh yes; I can plait whips, and make baskets middling, and dig potatoes, and hold the rod at the corn-cutting."

"And can you read?"

"Read! no," with a soft laugh.

"Do you know who made you?"

"I wasn't made, I was found."

"Did you ever hear of God?"

"Oh aye; Hughie speaks of him when he has had the poteen and is mad."

"Do you know anything of the blessed Jesus?"

"Yes; he's in Kitty's box. She says her rosary to him when she has time."

"Then I suppose you don't know about heaven, or the Holy Virgin, or the saints or angels?"

"No."

Padeen shook his head with a dejected consciousness of his own ignorance, and the young priest shook his too, sighing.

"What is your name?"

"Padeen."

"Then, Padeen, I shall come back to you before sundown, and we shall go together to your home, and I shall have a talk with Kitty and Hughie and the boys. I am the new priest, and you and I must get to know each other."

"Yes, sir." The child sat quite erect and motionless, and watched the stranger out of sight. That was a priest then, a man who wore whole clothes and had a

smooth clean face, and spoke the Irish in such a soft odd way, betraying, though not to Padeen's unpractised ears, that it was an acquired and not a native language. Padeen had heard about priests, and knew that Kitty had seen one, when she spoke gently to the boys and made brief futile efforts to tidy up, and had for a time a serener light in her eyes. He understood, too, that priests were good to the poor, and that they were somehow connected with the periodical booming of that far-away church-bell, but beyond that he knew nothing about them. Of course the old parish priest had visited Kitty and Hughie many a time, but Padeen had been at the moss, or with the goslings, or playing, perhaps, in the swamp among the rushes and yellow lily flowers, at these times, and so had always missed him. Thus it had happened that the ten-year-old little Irish boy, in the so-called priest-ridden land, had never seen one of the clergy of his own denomination.

CHAPTER II.

THE drizzling rain had become a down-pour that soaked the spongy meadows, lay in pools on the ill-kept highways, and dripped dismally from the few shrubs and bushes that sparsely dotted the landscape. The young priest shivered, as he drew his coat-collar higher round his ears and strode forward with swift steps that crushed heavily into the shrinking turf. Everything around him depressed him, and his heart lay in his bosom heavy as lead.

The heavy rain beat like tears against his pale face, and despair seemed to gather like a cloud around him. How was he to live his life through here? How was he to labour among hearts to whom hope seemed an impossibility? And yet they were so brave and enduring, the poor beings who were his charge; so thankful that things were not always at their worst; so hospitable with the scraps of oatake or the cups of milk which were all they had to give; so patient from the beginning of their toilsome life till its close, when their dying eyes sought the figure of embodied patience on a cross, dying also; so simply trustful that there was a plan in life somehow, and that things would be equalised one day somewhere. The priest's breath came heavily as the wintry landscape surged before him. From his labouring breast an inarticulate cry was going up to Heaven, a prayer for power to strew a little sunshine on the desolate paths trodden by his fellow-men. And

yet what could he do? He had visited a score of houses that day where the same hopeless depression lay like a blight, where gloom, and dirt, and privation were factors of everyday existence, where birth meant pain, and maturity toil, and home a loveless partnership entered on as a matter of habit; where there were no books, no thoughts, no attainments, no rest save a little sitting by the threshold or the hearth, when the sun had set and it was too dark to work.

"The sum of their misfortunes breaks my heart, and what can I do but relieve a little in detail here and there as I am able?" the priest thought despairingly, and for the first time a covetous desire stretched itself out towards the flocks, and herds, and lands, and great possessions of some rich men he had known.

"To think of stayin' out in rain like that till ye're wet through; what's the manin' of it, ye bad child ye?" Kitty asked, lifting a hard hand threateningly towards Padeen's cold, red ears. "An' look at Molly, wid sthrames of water runnin' out of her, an' yerself drenched to the skin an' not a dry rag in the house to change wid."

Padeen went up to the hearth and stood there dejectedly, each chill foot covering the other alternately, and his teeth chattering a little, as stray gleams from the peat-fire caught him here and there, and made him feel how cold he was.

"He said he would be back by sundown, an' so I waited."

"Who said?"

"The priest."

"The new priest! Have ye seen him?"

Kitty's wrath was immediately changed to interest.

"Yes; he was goin' across the meadow to Jim Moriarty's, and he said he would be back by sundown, an' I could fetch him here to see you an' Hughie."

"An' so ye waited for him. Then, poor son, I won't scould any more. There, tie up Molly, an' by that time I'll have the fire alight an' ye can dhry yerself."

"An' what about the priest? Should I not go out an' wait for him yet?"

"Oh no, alannah, he'll know it was the rain dhruv ye indoors, an' if he asks where Kitty an' Hughie live any neighbour will tell him."

Kitty had never any difficulty in making things tidy or "reddin' up," as she called it; it was in keeping them tidy that all the difficulty lay. In a trice the kitchen floor

was swept and the flames were sending golden bars of light into remote corners, and Padeen, ensconced on a hob, had ceased to shiver.

"He'll come yet maybe," Kitty was saying in her own mind, "an', if not, a good fire on a night like this is no harm, anyway." To these poor untaught souls the priest's presence always brought a suggestion of a vague far-off betterness, and in the new priest's case there was a little natural curiosity added to the usual interest.

"Ye might tell us a tale, mother," Lanty, the eight-year-old, hazarded from his creepie in the corner. The unusual tidiness and stillness had a smack of Halloweve or Christmas about them, of festivity and good times of some sort, and Lanty knew nothing better than storytelling in the warmth.

Kitty smiled encouragingly. That entertainment cost nothing, and Kitty had a good heart.

"Maybe I'll tell the story of the blessed St. Andrew an' the sea sarpint if yez is good boys till supper-time," she answered, with some lurking belief that the priest's approach involved tales on sacred subjects only. But Phil the youngest crept into his mother's lap and lay there gracefully as a young Bacchus, demanding, with a certain imperiousness born of the moment, that they should have the tale then and there, and that it should not be about any sarpint, but about pretty Peggy, who was a good girl and married the prince, and after that wore a gold crown always, and had black-pudding for dinner every day. And Kitty laughed a rare laugh born of the moment too, and hugged her baby son to her heart with one of those instinctive movements that have a grace of their own, and began the oft-told tale of pretty Peggy's adventures and misadventures, while the circle of eager faces was lifted to hers as to that of one inspired. So the picture the priest saw when he raised the wooden latch and entered the hot, ill-ventilated room, was not without a certain homely attractiveness. In the corner Molly stood soberly chewing the cud and turning, now and then, a pair of soft, luminous eyes towards the group by the hearth; on the poles supporting the roof fowls roosted in rows, a faint guttural sound or a slight stirring of the wings giving occasional intimations of their wakefulness; while from the stone hob beside the ascending smoke-wreaths,

Padeen's wondering, dreamy gaze extended forward, past the firelight and the rosy faces fronting him, into the shadows and obscurity beyond. It was one of the happy moments that come even in the saddest lives, and the young priest falling on it reproached himself for his murmuring of the morning. In this one poor cabin there was that which but a little ago he had despaired of finding—time for rest and love.

"And it's his riverence sure enough through the rain and darkness," Kitty deposited her youngest hope on his bare feet, and rose curtsying and smiling. "If yer riverence would dhraw up to the fire and would be seated," offering him her own stool, "an' you, Padeen, get up an' give me the hob." Kitty sat down again on the duties of hospitality intent, but kept her arm round the child she had displaced with an instinct of timidity.

"And how are you again, my young friend?" The priest let his soft, sad glance rest a moment on the child's face.

"I waited till it was dark, sir," Padeen explained apologetically.

"Through all the rain? I am very sorry."

"You had said I was to wait," Padeen answered simply.

"And you had no thought but to obey. Do you know, Padeen, men become martyrs and heroes so?"

"It did not matter for him, so as he could hev' kep' Molly dhry. He's used to wettin's," Kitty interposed, determined to ignore the priest's acquired Irish and to show him that she knew a second language too.

Father James was a little startled. Did the child's comfort then really matter less than the cow's?

"Padeen is not your own son, I presume?" he said a little coldly.

Poor Kitty, who never had known any difference in her feelings towards one child or another, was quite unconscious of any implied rebuke.

"No, sorr, he's not me own," she answered cheerfully; "though thruth to tell, that niver enthers me mind but when some stranger asks it of me."

"And do you know whose child he is?"

"Yes, sorr." Kitty looked round at the circle of innocent listening faces furtively, before she remembered that she alone of all her household "had" the English. "Yes, sorr; there was Hughie's sister Norah, a pretty girl, but fooledge. She went away

two years afore we found him by the door."

"And you think he is her son?"

"Yes, sorr, I always thought so, an' lately he is growing like her."

"Do you know if she was married?"

"No, sorr, I'm feared not. You see if she had been, there would have been no need to steal back at night an' make a foundling of her child and steal away again."

"True." The young man stifled a sigh.

If Kitty's surmise were correct, then the dream he had dreamt that day, a dream that had come at the bidding of those soft, questioning child's eyes, was over. Nothing stained must be offered to the Church; he could not educate Padeen for the priesthood now. And yet he must do something for the boy. The child that was nobody's must be his care.

"I suppose Padeen will be hiring when he is older?"

"Yes, sorr," sighing.

"And he will go away and leave you and the neighbourhood, and will forget you?"

"Yes, sorr; there is no other way. They fly off like the young birds, when they are big enough." The woman's eyes, as soft and soulless as those of Molly in the corner, grew wet.

"Then had you not better let him come to me now? I need a smart little fellow to mind my pony, and to help Margaret, my servant; and I have taken a fancy to Padeen. If you entrust him to me I shall clothe him and take care of him, and teach him to read and write, and make a man of him."

"Oh, Padeen, did you hear?" Kitty was rosy as a girl with the shock of her surprise and pride. Living under the priest's roof was happiness in her eyes, and a kind of consecration. "The holy father will take you to live with him, and there will be no need to go away and forget us."

The child's face turned crimson, and then grew pale again. To live always with this beautiful stranger, to be always within call of Kitty and Hughie and the boys, to see Molly at times and have the purple crests of the hills always before his eyes, how beautiful that would be! Good fortune had come to him, without the need on his part of seeking it.

"Are you satisfied, Padeen, and will you come?"

"Yes."

"Say 'Yis, sorr, an' thank ye,'" Kitty admonished in a whisper.

"Yes, sir, and thank ye, and I'll serve ye faithfully," Padeen answered in his native Erse, with a sudden rush of tears dimming the brightness of his soft eyes.

SHILLINGBURY SKETCHES.

NO. VI. THE GRAMMAR-SCHOOL—NEW STYLE.

THE retirement of Dr. Addlestrop from part or lot in all temporal things, as well as from the head-mastership of Christopher Sendall's Free School, did not make the Rev. Onesiphorus Tulke any the less busy or expeditious in taking possession of his new abode. The very day after the doctor's funeral, furniture vans began to unload their contents at the school-house gate. A glance at these was enough to show that a complete transformation awaited the old rooms where formerly the eye could rest on nothing that was not of a tint softened and mellowed by age. The colours in the carpets and curtains, primary once perchance, had been subdued into secondary if not tertiary shades. The furniture, whether oak or mahogany, was solid and dark, and the pictures which had hung on the panelled walls were fine old engravings in black, carved frames. To go into the doctor's drawing-room on a hot summer's day, gave almost the same sensation as one feels in entering the cool scented darkness of an Italian church from the sweltering heat and blazing glare of the piazza outside.

In the matter of household furniture it was evident that the taste of Mr. Tulke ran on totally different lines. Brussels carpets, with scarlet flowers sprawling over an orange ground, covered the oaken floors. Coloured prints in florid gilt frames almost concealed the rich brown wainscot on the walls; and where the doctor's old book-cases and cabinets, his claw-legged tables and Chippendale chairs, used to stand, Mr. Tulke introduced a selection of furniture in the best style of the age—furniture forty years ago was not so pretty as it is now—which smelt very strong of French polish. The school-house was furnished thoroughly from top to bottom, the drawing-room being made especially resplendent, though Mr. Tulke was a bachelor, and it may have been from this circumstance that an opinion got abroad in Shillingbury that the school-house would not be long ungraced by a mistress.

On the first day of the next quarter Mr. Tulke was in his place presiding over a school of at least a score boys; for the

fathers of families at first believed that great things would come out of the new educational scheme, and the promises and professions of the new head-master himself rather tended to foster this belief. Mr. Tulke was a puffy, pasty-faced man of eight-and-thirty, or thereabouts, with pale washed-out blue eyes and straw-coloured hair and whiskers. The latter were carefully cut into inch-long streaks just in front of his ears, and taken in connection with his closely-shaven face and severe ecclesiastical garb, might have led one to think that Mr. Tulke belonged to what was then known as the Tractarian party in the Church. What his tenets at other times and in other places may have been we knew not, but it soon became manifest that Mr. Tulke, for the time being at least, was an adherent of the extreme evangelical party of which our then Bishop, the Hon. and Right Rev. James Charles Chitcham, was likewise an ornament.

Mr. Tulke was a man of great conversational powers. That is, he always insisted on doing all the talking himself; but as he rarely talked of anything or anyone except the head-master of the free school, his dissertations occasionally became a little tiresome. His ordinary manner of discourse could not have been more impressive had he been an archbishop, and he did not store up his impressive words and looks, and only bring them out in times of grave crisis. He would stop you and ask you whether you thought it was going to rain, or enquire how much you were paying for firewood, in a deep voice of tender melancholy which a prelate pronouncing the benediction, or a judge passing a death-sentence on a prisoner, might have envied. When he shook hands with you, his great clammy paw seemed as if it would incorporate your own luckless member into itself, so close, and moist, and prolonged was the handshake.

The beginning of the second quarter under the new dispensation saw a further increase in the number of the free-school boys. Mr. Rasker was a very good teacher in his own department; and, if Mr. Tulke knew all he was declared by his diploma to know, the five-and-twenty boys in our free-school were very well looked after. At the summer breaking-up there was a prize distribution, a thing the like of which had never before been thought of, accompanied by recitations by the more promising boys, and speeches from the rector, Mr. Winsor, a neighbouring squire,

who had taken Mr. Tulke particularly under his patronage, and from Mr. Tulke himself. The scholars recited, and the guests spoke as if they did not feel quite at home in their work, but this was not the case with Mr. Tulke. He had a certain position to establish in his speech, and he never lost sight of his point for a moment. This was to demonstrate to the company assembled what an exceedingly able man the new head-master was, and what a great educational work was that to which he had just put his hand.

Indeed, it really seemed as if the old school was about to awaken to a new life of usefulness. The boys were well taught, and taught, moreover, something which might help them on in the world. The stoutest defenders of Dr. Addlestrop, the most conservative sticklers for the sanctity of the founder's will, were fain to admit so much, and they admitted likewise that the new head-master was a very pushing, active man. To lift up the school from its low level, to be the Arnold of Christopher Sendall's foundation, would have been a task heavy enough for the ambition of most men; but it was not enough to satisfy the activity of the Rev. Onesiphorus Tulke.

A man may sit in a school-room and teach boys from year's end to year's end for twenty years at a stretch, and still never be heard of ten miles away. He will have his reward—posthumous perhaps—in the fruit of patient work; but this was not the sort of reward Mr. Tulke wanted, and he knew, moreover, that the object of his desire was one which comes only to men who are instant in reminding the world of their existence by lifting up their voices on every opportunity. There was never a meeting of any sort at Shillingbury at which Mr. Tulke did not at the very least "say a few words." He was always ready to mount any pulpit at the shortest notice, and perhaps the happiest time in his whole week was Sunday evening, when the rector would, more often than not, ask him to preach the sermon in the parish church.

But an occasional appearance in the pulpit at Shillingbury would hardly serve to lift a man out of obscurity, if he should simply go on preaching after the manner of his fellow-divines. Mr. Tulke did not mean to go on thumping his brains to produce sermons for a Shillingbury congregation to listen to at seven, and forget at eight o'clock. He wanted to be talked about, and his name to be a word in men's

mouths. He was impatient for renown ; but he was wise enough to hold his peace till he should find a cause worthy of his eloquence, and after a year or so of waiting he found one.

Several years before the time of which I am writing the placid lake of Anglican theology had been rudely ruffled by the very big stone, to wit, Tract XC., which a certain reverend gentleman had cast into it. The extending ripples made a little stir even in those zealously preserved shallows which were under the care of that hon. and right reverend overlooker, James Charles Chitcham, D.D. Here and there a private patron had obtruded upon the parishioners young men who started services on saint's days, and preached in white surplices. The bishop's brow would grow very black whenever he might be called upon to license any such disguised wolves as these ; but though he was an honourable as well as a right reverend, he could hardly refuse to license a man because he proposed to work harder than his predecessor had worked.

In the course of time the vicarage of Bletherton, a village adjoining Shillingbury, became vacant. It was not one of the prizes of the Church. The income was one hundred and eighty pounds per annum, and the vicarage-house was little better than a cottage. It was in the gift of an Oxford college, and very naturally all the clerical fellows in turn declined to have anything to say to it. So the living of Bletherton for a time went begging ; but at last a chaplain named Laporte accepted it, and then began a state of things ecclesiastic very different to that which had prevailed during the long and tranquil pastorate of the Rev. Thomas Dormer, the late vicar.

Mr. Laporte began by two full services every Sunday and a weekly communion. Then, when Easter came, the church, bare and ruinous as it was, was prettily decorated. The next innovation was a harmonium, played by the vicar's sister, and a Sunday choir of small children, and finally, when the scanty congregation met on Whit Sunday, they found the communion-table resplendent with a new altar-cloth, an elaborate brass cross, and two tall candlesticks.

But all the new vicar's innovations were not in the way of ritual. He made excursions into the then not much worked field of elementary education, and here he raised up enemies who would probably

have tolerated as great an excess of ritual as the age was then ripe for. The farmers had already begun to see there was "a sight too much larnin' about," and so the cry against the new parson waxed loud and bitter.

Farmer Oldacre and Farmer Newton alike declared that the vicar taught worse popery in the school than he preached in the church, and from that time they both abjured their monthly spell of church-going, and slept through the fourth Sunday afternoon as they had hitherto always slept through the other three.

Ever since he had heard that an Oxford chaplain had been appointed to the vacant preferment, Mr. Tulke had been sniffing persistently for some stray whiff of Rome in the neighbourhood of Bletherton, and now, when he heard tidings of the popish practices said to be carried on there, he stood undecided, like a cat in a tripe-shop, as to which he should first pounce upon. But at any rate the time for speaking had come, and accordingly, on the first opportunity, he fired off a tremendous No Popery sermon from the Shillingbury pulpit, and wrote a scathing epistle to the local paper, sending a copy of the same to the evangelical organ in the metropolis. Mr. Tulke, though he was a man of wonderful erudition, was not apparently a liturgical scholar, and the week after his letters appeared, a swarm of wasps came about his ears, and "Anglicanus," "Oxoniensis," "An Anglo-Catholic," and many others, made sad havoc with both his facts and his reasoning. Still, the sermon had been preached, the first blow had been struck, and Mr. Tulke stood out as the Protestant champion, at least as far as Shillingbury and its neighbourhood were concerned. And it is certain that from his champion's hobby, the Rev. Onesiphorus Tulke did come into close relations with many of the greater lights, whom he must have worshipped from a distance had he been content to confine all his energies to the education of the free boys.

The big man of Shillingbury was unquestionably Sir Thomas Kedgbury, of The Latimers. He was chairman of quarter sessions, and had once sat in parliament for a neighbouring borough. It was understood that Sir Thomas viewed with disapproval the growing assumptions of the priesthood, and it was possibly on this account that Mr. Tulke was asked to dine at The Latimers, and

requested to make what use he liked of the library there. But Sir Thomas, though a baronet, was not a wealthy man. Mr. Winsor, of Skitfield, had almost as many acres; and, much better, he had, besides, a share in a great London brewery. I do not know whether there is any connecting link between beer and evangelical thought, so I leave it to the student of sociology to decide how it was that the members of Mr. Winsor's firm were, all of them, as anxious to drive their fellow-men into churches of a certain stamp on Sundays, as they were to entice them on week-days into public-houses bearing the superscription "Winsor's Entire." If the beer Mr. Winsor brewed did in some instances act injuriously upon the bodies of his fellow Christians, his anxiety for souls was zealous and far reaching. He had dozens of livings in his gift, to which none but the most approved "Winsorians" were appointed. He spent thousands in evangelising, the youth of Connemara, and in making moderately good Jews into indifferent Christians. The Church Association did not exist at this epoch; but if Mr. Winsor is still above ground he is, I do not doubt, one of its most open-handed supporters.

Of all the benefices in Mr. Winsor's gift the plum was undoubtedly Pudsey, and it happened that this became vacant about six months after Mr. Tulke had lifted up his voice against the Roman practices of a large party in the Church. Pudsey was worth about six hundred a year, and, as soon as men knew it was vacant, Mr. Winsor's post-bag was filled to bursting with letters of suggestion, recommendation, and application, for on a sudden the belief seemed to have got abroad that Pudsey, although the population was below four hundred, was one of the most important benefices in the county, and Mr. Winsor received warnings by the bushel of the evils which must come to religion if any but a right-minded man should be appointed to Pudsey, and suggestions by the score as to where such a right-minded man might be found.

The fortnight which followed was as anxious a one to many households as the days of the conclave used to be to the Cardinals' nephews and nieces. Mr. Winsor indeed had to institute a sort of a conclave of his own on account of the number and persistency of the personal applicants. At last he spoke. The matter was settled. The rectory of Pudsey was

offered to and accepted by the Rev. Onesiphorus Tulke.

And then from many a parsonage there rose up a chorus of comment on the new appointment. Some sharp things were said of Mr. Winsor, and some very sharp things of the new rector. Who was he? Where did he come from? Mrs. Sanctuary's brother declared that he was the very double of a man he had seen preaching in a surplice in Devonshire. Then the bishop came in for a little playful satire because he had raised no difficulties about non-residence. The school-house was only half a mile farther from the church than the rectory was, and his "dear friend Winsor" had assured him that no harm should come to the rectory buildings. Some hints were dropped that this half-mile of distance would have been hard to span over, had not the new rector been a man after this bishop's own heart; that no assurances from his dear friend Winsor as to the conservation of the rectory-house would have induced him to allow the new incumbent to be non-resident, had the new incumbent not cried out so loud against the Bletherton atrocities.

So Mr. Tulke became rector of Pudsey, and scarcely was he instituted when Bishop Chitcham died, and another prelate came, who loved not Bishop Chitcham nor his works. He made rather a wry face over the tenure of Shillingbury School together with the rectory of Pudsey by Mr. Tulke, but he took no hostile steps thereanent, for he was a man of the world and knew quite well the mischief that Mr. Winsor could stir up should his coat be stroked the wrong way. Thus Mr. Tulke was left in peace over his new bit of good fortune.

And Mr. Tulke showed no sign of settling down into apathetic indolence now that he had become a "bloated pluralist." He started at once a fund for the restoration of his church, extracting subscriptions with much ingenuity from everybody who owned a stick or a square yard of property in the parish. He established the "Shillingbury Deanery Branch" of the Society for the Suppression of Praying-wheels in Thibet, and he became secretary and treasurer of the Diocesan Association for supplying Feeding-bottles to the Zenanas of our Indian Empire. He organised a crusade against the local benefit clubs which held their meetings in public-houses, and started a mutual self-help sick and annuity club, which was to abolish pauperism

and give every member a pension in his old age. Of this he also became treasurer.

Soon after he entered in possession of Pudsey rectory Mr. Tulke entered also the holy estate of matrimony. The lady he chose for a helpmeet was a certain Miss Small, who had lived with Mrs. Winsor as companion since the marriage of that lady's only daughter. It had commonly been supposed that Mr. Winsor would do something handsome for Miss Small whenever she might find a husband, and possibly Mr. Tulke may have shared this belief when he made offer of himself. If he had, he was doomed to be disappointed, for Mr. Winsor, thinking perhaps that he had done enough for the new ménage by the grant of the great tithes of Pudsey, gave Miss Small a wedding-breakfast and nothing else.

Matrimony worked a great change in Mr. Tulke's household arrangements and expenditure. Mrs. Tulke, as Miss Small, had undergone twelve years of seclusion; so, now that she had a home of her own, she let her husband see at once that, if he wanted to have any peace in his life, he must let her have a little of what he was fond of calling "worldly vanity" in hers. Mrs. Tulke had a smart phaeton, with a high-stepping horse and a groom in livery. Two of her sisters, of whose existence their brother-in-law had never heard till the week before the wedding, arrived at the rectory on a visit of indefinite length, and, during the year following his marriage, Mr. Tulke had to give more dinner-parties in the old school-house than Dr. Adlestrop had given in all the years of his tenure.

Perhaps, on the whole, Mr. Tulke was not more ungrateful to his patron than the recipients of bounty generally are, but sometimes, when he thought of that "something handsome" which had dangled like a bait before his eyes, he would cry out, in the bitterness of his heart, that he had been inveigled into matrimony under false pretences; and after a time, when he found his expenses more than doubled—there were two little beds in the nursery by this time—and his income at a standstill, he began to repent bitterly that he had not remained a bachelor. He was not a happy man, it was quite clear. He was no longer faultlessly shaven. The blackness of his broadcloth and the whiteness of his linen no longer set each other off by vivid contrast. Both the one and the other seemed striving to subdue their

former brilliancy into a dirty grey. The oily effusiveness of his manner was gone. He rarely "said a few words" on any platform now, but he was still ready, at all times and in all places, to collect the subscriptions to any of the various societies and funds whose bag-holder he was.

After a while, Mr. Tulke began to receive visits pretty frequently from a certain Mr. Gorgona, a dark gentleman from London, very smartly dressed and wearing a good deal of jewellery. Mr. Gorgona would sometimes stay the night, and it became a matter of remark amongst the school-boys that these visits did not tend to sweeten the head-master's temper. At last, one day, shortly after his yearly tithe audit and the receipt of his half-year's salary from the school-governors, he was called away on pressing business to London, leaving Mr. Rasker to look after the boys for a day or two.

For a second and a third day Mr. Rasker presided at the head-master's desk. A fourth and a fifth day passed, and there was no notice of Mr. Tulke's return. Indeed, no letter of any sort had come from him since his departure. At the end of a week Mrs. Tulke became very uneasy, and then there did come tidings of our truant head-master which caused such a panic in Shillingbury as probably had never been known there before. A writ and judgment against him at the suit of one Emanuel Davids came down; the furniture was seized and sold to satisfy the huge claim—two thousand pounds and more—of this voracious Hebrew; while the members of the Self-Help Club, and the subscribers to the various funds and societies whose cash the Rev. Onesiphorus had so kindly collected, began to feel a little uneasy and doubtful as to where their offerings might ultimately go, or to speculate whether they really would enjoy that pension in their declining days of which they had so fondly dreamed.

The fact was the man was a hopeless insolvent when he became a candidate for the head-mastership. The governors, it seemed, had allowed their eyes to be dazzled by one or two flashy testimonials, and neglected to make strict investigation as to their candidate's antecedents. He had begun life as an architect; but, finding that no one would employ him in building churches, he determined to make an effort to fill them. With a small legacy left him by an aunt he bought a proprietary chapel in London, and here began that connection

with Messrs. Gorgona and Davids which was destined to terminate so disastrously. When he came to Shillingbury he wanted money; more money was wanted when he became rector of Pudsey; and, of course, money could be only borrowed by a man in his position by paying for it pretty smartly.

After the crash it was discovered that he was heavily in debt to most of the Shillingbury tradesmen, and, of course, the living had to be sequestrated. This was the most bitter pill of all for Mr. Winsor in his capacity of patron and evangelical light of the county. Some time before this the bishop had made overtures of peace towards him, but Mr. Winsor was not a man for compromise. The bishop had spoken words on the subject of the apostolic succession, which made him in Mr. Winsor's sight impossible as a fellow-labourer in the vineyard. So the episcopal overtures were declined with thanks. Now the bishop had his turn. He sent to Pudsey a young gentleman of the most advanced Anglican school to discharge the duties of the church during sequestration, and Mr. Winsor had the pleasure of knowing that from the pulpit, which he had destined to be the peculiar fount of evangelical truth, doctrines were preached which were little better than rank popery.

Mr. Tulke was never seen in Shillingbury again, and Mrs. Tulke and her two babies enjoyed a small pension from Mr. Winsor. From time to time stories came down to us how Mr. Tulke had been recognised as a steward on board an Atlantic steamer, and afterwards as collector of tolls on the pier of a fashionable watering-place; and one witness declared that, if a certain Richard the Third he had seen on the boards of an East End theatre was not the late headmaster of Shillingbury Free School, he was marvellously like him.

GEOFFREY STIRLING.

BY MRS. LEITH ADAMS.

PART III. CHAPTER IV. AN OLD SONG.

RALPH STIRLING was no fool. The training his father had given him, the careful tutorage, together with much seeing of foreign lands and learning of foreign tongues, were indeed hardly likely to culminate in such a result. He possessed great store of knowledge of the world for

one so young. He knew his own world. He knew that that world would by no means clap its hands in frenzied applause if he married Hester Devenant's daughter.

As long as a man or woman who has risen in the world does nothing to make him or herself either conspicuous or disagreeable, the world is ready to be forgetful and complaisant enough. You do not remember that A's father stood behind his own counter and dealt out the family sugar in neat three-cornered parcels, until A, presuming upon his wealth and acquired equality, says or does something underbred that gets your back up. Then the three-cornered parcels pelt you like so many brickbats; and (though inclined to be theoretically and sentimentally Republican before) you suddenly become Conservative to the backbone, and are convinced that though "the man's the man for a' that," you infinitely prefer him when he bears the "guinea stamp" of culture and refinement.

The people of Becklington had accepted Hester Devenant as the mistress of the White House, as a woman who intruded herself nowhere, and, if eccentric, was assuredly nothing worse. Had Hester chosen to do so, she might have made her way among the local and smaller surrounding gentry of the neighbourhood. But she did not choose. She met advances with stubborn repulsion, and for that very reason did many persons of some position and vast curiosity long to know her. That which is unattainable has ever a charm all its own. Had Mrs. Devenant betrayed a wish to mingle with these persons, doubtless they would have dubbed her "pushing;" as it was they agreed to call her "peculiar," and her daughter Hilda, "interesting."

But once it should become known that the girl was to become the wife of the young squire of Dale End, things would take a changed complexion. It would be promptly and acridly called to mind that Hester Devenant was but a farmer's daughter; and that she had—in the days when she and Gabriel lived up among the dykes—been seen by more than one eye-witness to "whitestone her own doorstep."

People who, in the olden days, before M. Lemaire left all his worldly possessions to his niece Hilda, would have thought they were behaving "nicely" to Mrs. Devenant if they bid her the time of day as they passed her with her basket of frugal marketings upon her

arm, would now have been ready to receive her as, comparatively speaking, an equal. But, if it were convenient to do so, there could be no possible guarantee that they would not remember having so passed her many times and oft. It might promptly be suggested, too—under such circumstances—that she volunteered to nurse the old squire in his hour of need, with the crafty design of getting a “footing” in the house, and ultimately marrying Hilda to the young squire. That Ralph was, at that time, believed to be dead, would go for nothing, since, when people are spiteful, they are rarely, if ever, either logical or accurate.

Ralph knew that all these things might come to pass; but he believed himself to possess a strong ally in Lady Boscawen. It has been said that he regarded her as the best of women. With him best meant most generous. A lurking and rather comical fancy that she would find Hilda more easy to forgive, since pretty Ethel no longer adorned the parent nest, made him smile, as he mentally placed Ethel's mother in the position of Hilda's social godmother and warm-hearted ally. He counted, too—love is apt to make a man rather selfish—upon that halo of reflected tenderness that surrounded the living prototype of Lady Boscawen's dead son. And then Hilda would plead her own cause. Who could look upon her and not love her? Who could listen to the tones of the voice which, even when it was most glad, held a ring of sadness, and not be moved and won? It was impossible to see and know Hilda Devenant without recognizing the fact that her life had not been as that of other women. Self-repression, the habitual thought of another that pushes into the background every thought of self, these lessons that come to most women with middle age, with wifehood, motherhood, and the trials and struggles of life, had come to Hilda in the morning of her days. They had left their mark in ripeness and sweetness; but in sadness too. Hilda, then, was bound to win the heart of Lady Boscawen. She was destined to reign in the county, a fellow-queen with that best of women; her chosen friend, almost her adopted daughter. The part that Mrs. Devenant was to play in this blissful state of affairs was hardly defined. It was a sort of misty vacuum to be presently filled in by the hand of time.

One lovely afternoon, in the month that gives us just here and there a

touch of gold upon the trees, and a dash of red across the woods, Lady Boscawen, returning from a round of visits to various friends, pursued her lord into the smoking-room. Her face wore a look of portentous gravity, there was a line visible between her brows, and an injured droop at the corners of her mouth.

“Denby,” she said, sitting down on a desirably luxurious chair, but sitting bolt upright, as refusing to be cajoled by it, “I have been hearing things of Ralph.”

Now Sir Denby had been hearing things of Ralph for some time back, and had been keeping the said things from his spouse, lest she should be vexed by them.

Hence he displayed a guilty and crest-fallen demeanour as he met her severe gaze, and noticed that the hands with which she smoothed out her gloves upon her knee, trembled ever so slightly.

“You have already heard, then, that Ralph is doing that which is not fitting?” said Lady Boscawen matterially. “Denby, I hate deceit!”

“I know you do, my dear,” said Denby uneasily; “but you see I thought they might be just silly rumours.”

“You should have told me. I could have sifted them.”

“What is there to prevent you sifting them now, my dear?”

“If all I have heard to-day be true, it is not a case of sifting the state of affairs, but of swallowing them whole—” Here Lady Boscawen gave a gulp, adding, with a pathetic sigh, “If one can!”

Sir Denby began to whistle softly to himself to pass the time away.

“It is most unfitting altogether,” said Lady Boscawen, hardly liking to put the unfitting thing in plainer words, “and you, Denby, are very heartless not to be more sympathetic.”

“Bless my soul!” replied Sir Denby; “I’m as sorry as anything, but I’ve seen this girl—Mrs. Devenant’s daughter—and I’m bound to say she’s a most fitting—”

“Wife for Ralph Stirling?” suggested Lady Boscawen with withering sarcasm.

“No, no; a most fitting person to turn a man’s head—to make him ready to make a fool of himself, don’t you know?”

“No, I do not know, Denby. It is only persons with ill-regulated minds who can understand such things, I should say.” Lady Boscawen looked as though her own mind were regulated to an inch as she spoke, rose, and quitted the room with crushing dignity.

But her heart, apparently, hardly kept pace with her mind, for before the evening was over, she began to wonder if it would ever be possible to forgive Ralph should he marry Hilda Devenant. Next she called to mind that some one had said that the girl had been educated in Paris. That was a point in her favour certainly.

"I have noticed the girl at church," she said to the penitent and conciliatory Sir Denby, late that night, "and I think—nay, I am sure—that with a little brushing up she might be—yes, really presentable. As to the mother, she is doubtless a designing person, and has thrown the young people together purposely."

Sir Denby thought of "Julia's second girl," but, like a wise man, held his peace.

Meanwhile, what of Hilda?

Never could any creature be imagined less conscious of the stir she was creating; never a gentle heart so lapped in its own blissful dreaming, to the utter exclusion of all sounds from the world beyond.

It was Hilda's habit to look upon herself in the light of a person vowed to one object in life, a sort of votary at the shrine of a self-elected saint. Assuredly Hester Devenant was no saint; yet to her service and worship was Hilda vowed. The girl had reasoned and dreamed herself into the conviction that this sacred office of hers was a legacy left to her by that father whose memory was still infinitely precious to her, whose words of love and soft caressing ways were as vividly remembered now as in the days when they were dear realities.

"Ma reine, ma petite reine!" How could Hilda forget those words? Were they not the last she ever heard spoken by "mon camarade's" lips—the loving valediction of a parting that was supreme? After that all was the coldness of death; the silence of the grave. After that mon camarade slept so soundly that he could not hear her calling, and when she touched him, he was cold as the ice in winter. Chilled by that awful contact, how glad she had been of the warm grey kitten nestling in her arms—even of the wilful beautiful sunbeam that would come stealing in through the chink of the curtained window! It all seemed so long, so long ago, and yet her father's love, and death, and loss had struck the key-note of Hilda's life.

He was gone, and she—little Hilda—his petite reine—must take care of "mothie." It would be difficult, perhaps, to trace the

mental process by which the desolate child got at this inversion of relationship. Perhaps the lack of care and tenderness for herself on Hester's part helped to bring it about. If she could not receive she would give. It has been said that even in her childhood certain memories had arisen to trouble her—memories of hard words dealt out to a sorrowing man; of the scourge pitilessly applied in such fashion, as that each stroke, in a time to come, took the semblance of a crime.

When haunted by such thoughts as these, a perfect passion of pity would shake Hilda's soul for that mother who was to her the centre of her life. The sense of restlessness, of an eternal seeking for something, which had oppressed her in her childish companionship with Hester, had long since explained itself to her as the spirit of a sleepless penitence and remorse for hard words upon which death had set his awful seal, making them things indelible. Even lack of love towards herself was tenderly interpreted as the result of an entire and absorbing love and regret given to the dead.

"Mothie's heart has no room for me," the girl used to say to herself, sad at her own isolation (yet never jealous of that other). "It is too full of sorrow for him."

Then came the sweetness of her friendship with Alicia Deane; the perfect companionship; the never-failing sympathy; all the still, tempered sunshine that women can shed upon each other's pathway in life if they will.

But shadows gathered, grew, closed in.

Hester became strange, silent, moody. Words to which Hilda could affix no meaning fell from her lips. In the night time she wandered from room to room; Hilda (her heart throbbing heavily with mingled fear and wonder) following her, a gentle wraith with wealth of nut-brown hair floating on its shoulders.

The squire was dead. Poor Davey had set sail for a distant shore with a bleeding heart in his breast, and Hilda's hand had dealt the wound. When the fond but hopeless love which Hester had fostered for her own ends came to be clothed in words, it found no echo in the loved one's heart; and Davey realised too late that he had built his house of hope upon the sands.

As if this was not sorrow enough to fall upon the fair head of Gabriel's daughter, a deeper grief was added. She saw that bitter estrangement had come about between her mother and Davey. More than

once the sound of raised and angry voices had made itself heard in the White House, and Hilda had to run, with her palms pressed to her ears, lest words not meant for her to hear should find their way to them.

It was a terrible time, and she was glad when Davey went away. Nothing is so painful to a true woman as to find herself loved in deed and in truth, when she has nought to give in exchange for such precious merchandise; and Hilda was the truest of women. She took to lying awake of nights and listening to the river, as with soft, swift rush it made for its haven in the sea. Falling asleep at last with its murmur in her ear, she would dream that someone was drowning in treacherous waters—and wake, to tremble and sigh at the fancied echo of a cry for help from among the toss and the turmoil of tumbling waves.

In addition to these nervous fancies, a terrible dread—a dread that more than once in her life already had glared upon her for a moment like some horrible mask from behind a curtain, seen for an instant and then hidden mercifully away—began to take a form more distinct and tangible than ever it had done before.

She grew afraid to leave her mother alone even for an hour. She gradually became her constant and unfailing shadow, and night and day she prayed with all her earnest heart that God would avert the thing she feared, or, failing this, make her wise to meet it.

Breaking in upon this strange, sad life of hers, this daily strife of fear, and watchfulness, and unrequited love, came the sudden news of "Master Ralph's" safety. Then Hilda knew that it was of him she had dreamed when she heard that cry for help ringing across the troubled sea, when she listened to the rushing of the river till it grew as the voice of many waters making haste to close over a boy's bright head.

She did not know why she did so, but on the evening of the day that brought such blessed news to Becklington, Hilda gathered a few sweet blossoms from the window-garden at the White House, and, in the grey gloom, hurrying to the grave of Geoffrey Stirling and his wife, laid them reverently down, there to give out their perfumed breath and die.

She stumbled as she left the churchyard, for her eyes were dim with tears; yet her heart sang, and the river, that night, seemed to sing too, as if it were

telling a brave story in rhyme to the listening night.

And so the years passed on, until that summer dawned that was to bring Ralph Stirling back to his desolate home.

Hilda had longed to go with the rest of the world to St. Mary's that glad Sunday morning. But Mrs. Devenant had one of her restless fits upon her. Nothing was right; everything was wrong.

Hilda, driven here and there by this whim or that, chid herself for a passing feeling of impatience, heard the bells pealing and clashing, and smiled to think how much happiness there was in the world, after all.

And at noontide of that blessed day, singing the old song that Miss Alicia had taught her in the olden days, she passed under the shadow of the clematis to find "Master Ralph" waiting for her, bare-headed in the sunshine.

She had thought of him as a tall stripling, with laughing dark eyes, and a winning grace of manner that made him different from his fellows. She found him a man, older in look by many a year than those that he had lived through, full of a grave and exquisite courtesy, showing the signs of having passed through much suffering, and of consequent powers of sympathy with the pain of others.

From that hour and day all the world was changed to Hilda. Not that her outward life changed one jot, save that it was cheered and beautified by his frequent presence; but all its trials were lightened, all its troubles became easier to bear. Even that great and terrible dread seemed to show a less threatening aspect, and at times it almost vanished out of sight.

Her mother was assuredly less fitful and depressed. True she never spoke of Ralph in his absence (a silence under which Hilda chafed not a little); but she smiled when he came, the old wondrous beauty dawning in her face, the old power of charm that had once won Davey's heart, making itself felt.

Hilda never stopped to ask herself if she loved this man, who had brought the fulness of summer into her heart as the sun had warmed the earth to bloom and beauty. Was she not vowed to the shrine of her saint? Could thoughts of self be permitted to intrude themselves between her and her life's work? No! But how beautiful was the world, this one year of all others!

Hilda drank in all the story of Ralph's plans and ambitions for the future with the eagerness of a child listening to a fairy-tale, adding little suggestions of her own here and there, such as made her listener long to kiss the lips that uttered them.

He thought he had never known the full meaning of the word "helpmeet" till now. He thought that he had never known the meaning of the word "life" till now—all the noble uses it might be put to, all the precious joys that it might bring.

The day had been hot and sultry, but towards sundown a little breeze sprang up, and came stealing among the flowers in the White House garden, stirring their sleepy heads gently as if to rally them from their long stupor. The harvest moon, together with her attendant star, hung above the pine-woods and the river; and the after-glow of the sunset shone bravely in the west, melting from amber to rose and from rose to blue.

A thrush was singing on a bough near the widely-opened casement that looked upon the river. Two people listened to his song.

Ralph and Hilda.

Hester had fallen asleep in the room across the house-place, for she was weary with the long hot hours of the day—weary, too, with the beating in her brain that seemed to take the sound of mad, accusing words—words uttered over and over again, hard and pitiless as the strokes of a hammer on an anvil.

Hilda lay back in the corner of the low cushioned seat that ran round the window. Ralph stood leaning against the frame. Hilda watched the swelling speckled breast of the feathered songster. Ralph watched her. She wore a dress of pale daffodil, and at her throat was a posy of purple iris. A light as of deep content and joy unspeakable shone in her sweet serious eyes; a faint smile came and went about her lips.

"There—he has flown," said Ralph; "after bidding us such sweet good-night."

Had the bird's joyous song seemed to Hilda as the voice of her own heart, that she found no answer but a sigh?

"Am I to have no other song to-night?" asked Ralph.

"What you will."

"Then I will—the song I love best of all."

The colour deepened in Hilda's cheek; her bosom rose and fell as she crossed the room and took her place at the piano that stood in a deep recess.

"Must it really be that one?" she said, a new timidity holding her in its thrall.

"Really that one; that and no other."

A few soft minor chords followed each other in falling sequence, and then Hilda's voice—that clear sweet voice, whose deeper tones held the sadness of tears—began the song that Ralph loved to hear:

"Love is not a feeling to pass away,
Like the balmy breath of a summer day,
It is not—it cannot be—laid aside,
It is not a thing to forget or hide."

Never had that beautiful voice been so unmanageable. It trembled so sadly that at last the words of the song were hardly audible. It did not tremble less when Ralph's hand was laid upon her shoulder; it ceased altogether—how could it do otherwise?—when he drew her head back against his breast, and bent till his lips rested upon hers in the long first kiss of happy love.

"My darling," he whispered, when that kiss was ended, "is that our betrothal song?"

And Hilda, rising, came to his side, lifted her tender eyes to his, and answered:

"It is what you will."

Doubtless she had forgotten just then about the saint and the shrine, and the life vowed to one devotion. To say the truth she had forgotten all things in earth or heaven, save that Ralph Stirling stood there before her, her own, and not another's; her king whom she would gladly follow through the world—her lord, to whose behest she would at all times answer:

"It is what you will."

There was no room for any other thought in all her heart, save that. To give herself wholly, keeping nothing back; to love, even as she saw and felt she was beloved.

Nothing would content her less than the entire surrender, held in those tender, simple words:

"It is what you will."

She had had but little joy in her life, and now the greatest joy of all had come to her.

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